Haunted

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by TigerPrawn

Summary

Will's empathy helps him see more than just the living.

August

Will woke with a start, almost sitting as he did so, but he was restrained. Or so it felt.

It took him a moment to realise that it was the pain that had exploded through so many nerves that he couldn't tell which, that had kept him on his back.

He struggled for breath through the pain, lying there panting and shaking whilst he tried to regain some sense of… anything.

He was cold, the air was thick with something - a murkiness.

He levelled his breathing and began to take stock. The pain was subsiding - caused by the sudden movement. He methodically moved each muscle, each limb. Pain radiated from his

face, his shoulder… as he catalogued the injuries, each was met with a memory of the fight with Dolarhyde. Each wound inflicted.

Will tentatively raised his hand to his face and felt the stitches there, neat and surgical against his finger tips.

Slowly he began to warm, the air began to clear and his eyes adjusted to the darkness.

He was in a room. It looked old and smelled slightly musty, too dark to really see much but it seemed disused rather than run down. The bed was a basic metal frame with a very old, though not uncomfortable mattress. The bed linen smelled fresh, with a crisp pine scent. The light in the room was being cast by the full moon through a gap in the curtains.

The room started to grow darker as clouds rolled over and there was a distant rumble followed by a flash of lightning that lit the room further for a split second. Not a room, a suite, one that would have once been decadent.

As the storm rolled in and his eyelids became heavy, Will didn't hear the click of the door opening, though he did hear the warped wood creak on its hinges as it slowly opened. A figure stood in the doorway then. A shadow.

He was too exhausted to really take it in, or to focus - sleep trying to claim his shattered body once more. As his eyelids grew heavier the lightning flashed, illuminating the room. Though the figure loomed beyond the reach of the light, he could make out the shape of it. It had the shape of a man, but deep down Will knew that it wasn't. He knew that it was something else entirely.

Will slipped out of consciousness.

October

It took months for Will to heal, infection having set him back a little in the beginning. He was just lucky that he had a surgeon with him. A surgeon with money and a safe house.

Even if said safe house gave him the creeps.

Hannibal explained that their villa in Southern Italy was one that met his needs. He'd bought it at a very good price as the family had wanted a quick sale after a change in circumstances. It was remote but still well appointed with near luxurious amenities, even if some had not been kept up. If anything, it was exactly how Will might imagine a safe house belonging to Hannibal in Italy would look, though a little more run down than he'd have expected. The remote location alone afforded a different sort of luxury than the house on the bluff, but even that had been beautiful and opulent.

Will sat on one of the antique chairs on the terrace, looking out over the pool as Hannibal did his morning laps.

He was taking them an hour later now. Although it stayed quite warm in these parts the morning was a little crisper and so Hannibal adjusted. Even so, despite the morning warmth,

the ever present chill was there.

Hannibal didn't seem to feel it, Will observed. But Will did. In every room of the house and especially in the dining room.

He wasn't really the superstitious type and yet there was something about this place that made him sure that the chill wasn't caused by a draught.

He focused on Hannibal's athletic body slicing through the still water, each muscle moving beneath toned flesh. Even now he ached for the man. Despite having slept in the same bed since they both healed and become inseparable. Despite having made love more times than he could count, Will was still mesmerised.

Hannibal's body was a stealth machine. He had fooled so many over the years with his beautiful suits and coiffed hair. Few would suspect that beneath the layers, Hannibal carried barely any fat, and had the fitness of a college athlete. He was lean and muscular, built like a swimmer. He had core strength to be envied and the poise of a ballet dancer. He was lethal and Will struggled to take his eyes off him.

A colder wind blew past. One from within the house.

Will looked back over his shoulder, in through the glazed doors, but saw nothing. As always, there was nothing to see or rather something that was always just out of view leaving only the villa and the coldness within.

*

They hadn't killed since they had pulled themselves from the Atlantic.

It was something they had discussed, though. The idea of hunting together, bringing down another victim as they had the Great Red Dragon.

The only thing holding them back was the memory of that night. It had been so beautiful, so perfect, that to kill again might mar it unless it was something that would equal it.

Something that was equally as memorable.

It was a week before Halloween when the subject came up again. A mass murderer was at large and what had been Will's idle interest over the past months in trying to solve the case, had led them onto the man's trail. They could tip off law enforcement, or they could make the kill themselves. Surely, taking down a killer who had silently murdered innocent people in their sleep across several small towns in Northern Italy before running south would bring some of that thrill.

And, more so, the hunting of him. They could pick up his trail and hunt him down like an animal, and take him apart like one too. The idea of that sort of team work between them, sent a thrill through Will.

It also gave him another sensation. They were in the dining room when the discussion began, where it continued as Will pulled out his notes and maps and spread them across the table.

And where the cool air grew colder, and started to prickle at his flesh. Not goose flesh from the cold, but something more, almost stinging his skin with it - like being burned by tiny snowflakes hitting him.

As they planned their next move, Will could sense a presence with them in the room. A shadow of something else. He was reminded of the first night he woke up in this place and he realised that perhaps the shadow at the door frame hadn't been Hannibal as he had begun to assume.

*

Halloween wasn't the same as back in the US. That commercialised popularity was picking up as much as it was in other European countries, but not enough that they need be concerned about anyone winding their way along their secluded driveway to trick or treat.

Even so, the distraction of parties, trick or treaters and costumes meant that it was the perfect evening to finally put into action their plan to hunt, capture and kill the serial killer that Will had been tracking for months.

It had been simple, much easier than either of them had anticipated. And whilst Will would have liked to put this down to his planning and tacking, in fact it was because *Il Silenzio* was overconfident. He simply had no concern that he would ever be caught.

A killer noted for his stealth, named for it by the press, had shattered lives. No one had known he was there until it was too late. Will and Hannibal turned the tables, taking him unaware as he walked the street. They had flanked him and he had even turned as Hannibal quietly asked, "*Il Silenzio*?". If anything it was sadly easy, the thrill of the hunt cut short.

But they still had the evening ahead of them.

A chloroform soaked cloth was quickly applied and then after a short walk to the secluded car, the serial killer was made comfortable in the trunk.

Now *Il Silenzio* he sat in their dining room, tied to one of their fine chairs and Will couldn't shake the feeling that there were more than the three of them present.

The air seemed to crackle, bitter and cold. It was murky as it had been that first night. They were in a cold swamp and snow was about to fall.

"Well, here we are," Hannibal crooned, charming as he removed the gag from *Il Silenzio's* mouth and smiled, dragging Will from his reverie.

Hannibal spoke in perfect Italian but Will knew the gist of it. As Hannibal explained what it was they planned to do with the man who had targeted families over the last few months.

Hannibal, as was his way, made a performance of it all. He had already laid out his instruments of torture on the dining table and now revealed them with the dramatic removal of the cloth covering them.

Hannibal continued to narrate in Italian, as Will stood in the doorway to the kitchen. He leaned against the door jam and watched, in full sight of *Il Silenzio*, whose eyes flicked between them both with increasing fear.

Will's own eyes were drawn behind their victim. There was a shadow there, he was sure. But every time he tried to look at it, truly focus on it, there was nothing there.

It took Will a moment to realise Hannibal had stopped talking, and though he was menacingly inspecting his knives and other sharp instruments, his gaze was on Will. There was a questioning look there, just for a moment, and then gone again.

Hannibal continued moving a few things around until he finally looked up and gestured to Will to join him.

"My love, will you make our guest comfortable?"

Will nodded and pushed off from the doorframe, stalking quietly towards the increasingly squirming *Il Silenzio*.

"My Italian isn't as good as my husband's. But I got the gist. He warned you about me. He told you how much I can hurt you just with my hands. And I--"

Will's fists had been clenched in expectation of what was to come. How this part was, as they had discussed, his turn. When they had discussed it, Will had seen not only the brutal fight with the Dragon in his mind but also the moment he had beat the life from Randall Tier. He had felt the anger he felt then, and now felt on behalf of *Il Silenzio's* victims. He would avenge them.

But as he had walked forward he had stepped into a pocket of cold air. There was no other way to describe it. It wasn't the draft he'd experienced before, it was as though he'd walked into a refrigerated room. The air even colder than he had experienced before.

"Will?" Hannibal questioned, having realised Will had stopped. "You can feel it can't you. There's a presence."

As he spoke the lights dimmed for just a moment, and then again. They restored to full power and then flickered before dimming again and not returning to its previous brightness but remaining low. Casting the room in an eerie half darkness where the shadows seemed to grow longer, fuller.

Will and Hannibal remained still, but *Il Silenzio* was now struggling in the chair, muffled cries against the gag in his mouth. His eyes were wide and there was no denying how afraid he was.

"Interesting…" Hannibal muttered.

"What is it?" Will asked, a tinge of anger in his tone as he realised that though Hannibal never seemed to feel the cold, strangeness of the house, he certainly knew it was there but had said nothing.

“A previous occupant of this house was murdered here by townsfolk after she was found to be guilty of murdering several men in the town, those who had wronged her and other women. In the decades since, the house has passed through many hands, each with their own rumours and tales of the property being haunted by a vengeful spirit.”

Will turned and fixed Hannibal with a glare.

“And were you planning to tell me this, when?”

“I had planned to tell you from the beginning the reason why this house was so affordable. Why it is so avoided. But then I realised that you sensed something and I didn’t want to interfere with that or put thoughts in your head. I wanted to see how deep your empathy ran.”

Will huffed at that, a dry chuckle in his chest, “you were trying not to manipulate me by manipulating me? Wind me up and watch me go.”

Hannibal’s mouth twitched up into something of a smirk that Will could not return, not as the chill over his body increased.

Will’s jaw tightened, he felt frozen to the spot, watching *Il Silenzio* struggle. All the more so as he realised the struggling was increasing, as was the noise. Behind the man’s gag he was starting to scream.

Will took in a sharp breath and heard Hannibal do the same. Next to *Il Silenzio* stood a shadowy figure, one that wasn’t quite there if Will tried to focus on it and the same went for the thin blade in its hand.

“Will?” Hannibal questioned just above a whisper as the blade drew down *Il Silenzio’s* cheek, a line of blood erupting between parted flesh. “What do you see?”

“A shadow. A ghost. Don’t you see it?”

“No,” Hannibal swallowed audibly and took a step closer. “I can sense something, something heavy and oppressive. And I can see the results of its actions…”

Hannibal trailed off as the blade cut an identical line down *Il Silenzio’s* other cheek.

Il Silenzio, who had been sitting in shocked silence, shaking with tears rolling down his face and meeting the blood, seemed to suddenly wake. Suddenly to feel the pain being inflicted upon him.

He screamed. It was an inhuman sound and only seemed to anger the shadow.

Will watched as it flicked its wrist, now slicing criss-crosses over *Il Silenzio’s* face.

The shadow turned and Will could see its face - blurry and in and out of focus like bad television reception, but he could see it now. And he had expected to see a scowl there, hatred. Something evil and hard. But instead there was a smile, and not a sinister one, but a grateful one. Pleasant and feminine.

Will watched as the shadow let out a sigh and then with a deft action, stabbed the knife into *Il Silenzio's* chest with such force that Will felt as well as heard the man's sternum crunch.

The resulting scream was clearly music to the shadow's ears as it relished the pain it had caused. With a serene look, it glided towards Will, stopping once it drew close to the table and lowered itself into one of the chairs, waiting.

"What is it doing now, Will?" Hannibal asked, his eyes glued on *Il Silenzio*.

"I believe it's our turn." Will replied.

Hannibal's mouth twitched up into a smile and he resumed going over his instruments whilst *Il Silenzio* whimpered and made fruitless efforts to struggle. The lights began to flicker again, the room grew even colder, and Hannibal stepped forward to make his incision.

This would indeed be a memorable kill.

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